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# Chapter 7

## SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL STUDIES



The welfare of our people, our communities, and our democratic processes depends on education. Through the study of history, government, geography, and economics, students develop the knowledge and skills that will help them to become active and informed citizens. The emphasis on educational reform and curriculum standards will require many changes and coordination at all levels. There must be support from educators, parents, business and industry, government officials, and the media.

### School Boards

With a clear understanding of the rationale of the new South Carolina social studies curriculum standards, the local school board has a responsibility to support and encourage its full implementation. The school board can support the standards through appropriate policies that promote curriculum development and assessments and encourage professional development.

The school board can provide leadership by

- budgeting the resources needed to meet or exceed the recommended standards;
- encouraging interaction among districts, schools, and teachers as a way of sharing ideas, information, and practices;
- publicizing the success of outstanding social studies achievements; and
- promoting an educational climate that allows for innovation and encourages intellectual inquiry, achievement, and growth for all students.

### School Administrators

School administrators need an in-depth knowledge of the new standards in order to provide support. School officials can be a valuable resource in explaining to the public the underlying philosophy of the standards as well as the critical role of social studies in the school curriculum.

Administrators can support and improve the teaching of social studies by

- hiring personnel certified in social studies and matching teaching assignments to academic background;
- providing the expertise of a district-level social studies supervisor or coordinator;
- collaborating closely with teachers as they begin implementing these standards;
- arranging interaction among teachers of social studies from elementary, middle, and high schools;
- regulating and controlling class size as a means of ensuring effective instruction;
- ensuring equity in scheduling and teacher assignments;
- creating a climate that allows for innovation and the encouragement of intellectual inquiry, achievement, and growth for all students;

- establishing outreach activities with parents, guardians, leaders in business and industry, and other community members to build quality social studies programs; and
- rewarding teachers and students for outstanding performance in social studies.

Administrators must provide sufficient resources to ensure an exemplary social studies program by

- planning teachers' in-service training and workdays with meaningful activities;
- ensuring that teachers have time for planning and peer group meetings within their school;
- supporting teachers participating in professional organizations and activities; and
- providing necessary resources for technology such as computers with multimedia capabilities and access to the Internet, audiovisual equipment and materials, and instructional television and distance learning.

## Teachers

Teachers can provide the impetus for bringing about change in the field of social studies. Individual teachers can demonstrate professionalism through leadership and the articulation of important issues and needs in social studies at the district, school, and classroom level.

Teachers can ensure the development of a strong social studies program by

- using their own creativity and knowledge to inspire their students;
- taking advantage of available resources;
- participating in professional development opportunities;

- communicating with fellow educators and other stakeholders in high-quality social studies education;
- staying abreast of current research and technological innovations; and
- taking active roles in professional and community organizations.

## Professional Organizations

Professional organizations have a responsibility to bring their members together to provide leadership and training. They also have a responsibility to encourage policies that enhance social studies programs. In addition, they can give all teachers access to resources and current information by

- providing for seminars, workshops, conferences, and programs for the support of social studies;
- providing networking opportunities that encourage interaction among social studies teachers;
- serving as resources for governmental agencies and officials to make informed decisions about social studies; and
- encouraging and supporting the establishment and maintenance of standards for social studies teachers as professionals.

A list of national and state professional organizations related to social studies is provided above, in chapter 6, "Instructional Materials and Resources."

## Institutions of Higher Learning

South Carolina colleges and universities have the opportunities to be major players in supporting excellence in social studies

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education. It is imperative that colleges and universities provide teacher education programs that reflect the South Carolina Social Curriculum Studies Standards; these institutions can accomplish this objective by

- modeling effective teaching and assessment practices;
- providing professional development opportunities for teachers;
- providing the course work needed by teachers seeking social studies certification;
- providing meaningful programs for social studies teachers such as seminars, symposia and clinics; and
- encouraging faculty members to serve on social studies advisory boards and committees.

## **Parents**

Parents are encouraged to provide a nurturing environment that fosters good study habits and high expectations of students. They must understand that a good social studies curriculum creates responsible young citizens, reinforces family traditions, and builds a cohesive, productive, and compassionate society.

Parents can participate in and provide support for social studies education by

- volunteering their time and expertise;
- attending school functions and activities;
- endorsing professional development and innovative activities;
- communicating with their children's teachers about their progress in social studies;
- sharing family histories with their children;
- using community resources such as libraries and museums and attending cultural events;
- visiting historical and geographical sites during family vacations;
- learning local history and visiting points of interest; and

- modeling lifelong learning by reading, attending classes, watching educational television programs, and utilizing computer technology.

## **Communities**

Community organizations, both private and public, and individuals have much to contribute to the nurturing of the intellectual and emotional growth of students. They can all help support social studies education by studying these new standards carefully, making suggestions about the implementation of the standards, and pushing for the improvement of the teaching of social studies. Such efforts can lead to the formulation of appropriate policies by school boards and administrations, can enhance curriculum development and assessment, and can encourage the hiring and assigning of educators to teach social studies who are well qualified in the subject.

More specifically, individuals and organizations in communities can help social studies education by

- becoming more involved in local schools;
- celebrating and rewarding the achievements of students and teachers in social studies;
- volunteering in schools;
- sponsoring programs and events in schools;
- promoting discussion of social and educational issues;
- funding projects and programs;
- providing service-learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships as well as offering mentoring and shadowing opportunities;
- providing employment opportunities; and
- asking students and teachers to speak at or participate in their meetings.

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## **Business and Industry**

Business and industry can be responsible corporate citizens in their support of social studies education. The economy and stability of the community, state, and nation are dependent on the perpetuation and furtherance of a knowledgeable workforce.

Business and industry can encourage and support social studies reform by

- providing release time for employees and parents to visit or assist in classrooms and to serve as mentors or role models;
- providing personnel resources for consultation, teaching, field trips, career days and special programs, scholarships or incentives for teachers, and internships for students and teachers;
- donating useful equipment and materials to schools;
- arranging for teachers to shadow business and industry role models and promoting adopt-a-school or adopt-a-student programs;
- articulating business expectations to teachers and students;
- providing technical expertise and offering technology training and application;
- networking with schools to create realistic activities involving social studies; and
- helping to provide better career counseling at elementary, middle, and secondary levels to reinforce students' understanding of the need for social studies in a wide range of careers.

## **Government Officials**

Government officials can support the social studies curriculum by making informed decisions. They can help ensure the future welfare of our state and nation by

- supporting social studies programs through the funding and legislative processes;
- informing schools of available government educational printed material;
- facilitating interaction among education, government, and the private sector;
- passing legislation that encourages and promotes excellence in education; and
- recognizing and granting interviews to classes that tour government agencies.

## **Media**

The media can also play a significant role in promoting social studies education by projecting social studies as a way of illuminating and preserving our national heritage. The media must provide an objective portrayal of this heritage in order for students to have a full understanding of our society.

The media can support social studies education by

- informing the public of the new standards;
- reporting success stories of students and teachers;
- promoting a positive image of social studies education;
- helping to counteract stereotypes; and
- working with social studies professionals to highlight groups, individuals, and events that heretofore have received little media attention.

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*Call on thy children of the hill.  
Wake swamp and river, coast and rill,  
Rose all thy strength and all thy skill.  
Carolina! Carolina!*

—Henry Timrod

